

# MISCELLANY

## **I.C.B.P. World Conference**

In the Editorial of the last issue of *Il-Merill* the representation of the Society at the XV World Conference of the International Council for Bird Preservation was announced. We have now all the proceedings of the meetings some of which deal with Malta and other countries of the Mediterranean Basin. Our representative reported on the appalling situation of the birds in Malta and distributed his report to all the members present. A resolution concerning solely the Maltese Islands was put forward and accepted by the assembly. It states: "*Having noted that large numbers of migrants which are protected in most countries of Europe pass over Malta and many are destroyed, netted or trapped indiscriminately; this world conference urges the Malta Government that these activities be strictly controlled by adequate and enforced bird protection laws, and that a review of current legislation be undertaken; further urges the creation of bird reserves such as the pool at Ghadira which can afford sanctuary to migrants and provide facilities to educate the Maltese public in the appreciation of birds in their natural wild state.*" Copies of this resolution were sent by the General Secretary of the I.C.B.P., Miss Phyllis Barclay-Smith, to His Excellency the Governor-General, The Hon. Prime Minister, the Most Rev. Archbishop of Malta, the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Justice, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Commissioner of Police.

## **Din l-Art Helwa's Recommendations.**

Din l-Art Helwa Association has submitted its recommendations to the Government as one of its contributions towards European Conservation Year. Most of these are in line with our thoughts and views, and the most important states:

"that the Ghadira at Mellieha and the Islet of Filfla be declared National Bird Sanctuaries and be handed over in the form of a Trust to an appropriate body for bird protection".

## **Exhibition of Maltese Natural History.**

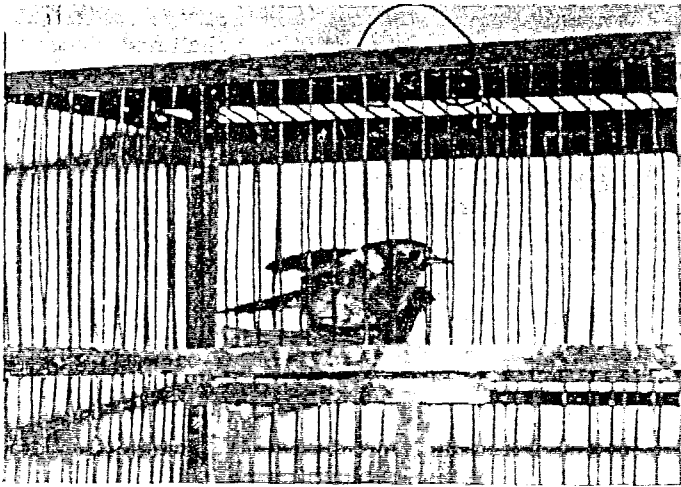
The Natural History Society of Malta, under the guidance of its hard-working President and founder, G. Lanfranco, organised an exhibition of Maltese Natural History from 18th-24th November, 1970, at the National Museum in Valletta. The aim of this highly commendable exhibition, a representation of Maltese Geology, Flora and Fauna, was mainly to instil an appreciation of our natural heritage and a desire to preserve it for the enjoyment of the present and future generations. The N.H.S.M. made it clear that the exhibited specimens of Flora and Fauna did not imply that their study should involve their destruction. On the invitation of the N.H.S.M. the Malta Ornithological Society took part in the exhibition by depicting a representation of our avifauna. By an agreement between the two Societies no stuffed birds were exhibited and instead photographs by E. Hosking were used. The guide-book of the exhibition stated, "*It will be noticed that there are no stuffed birds on view, due to the fact that*

one of the stumbling blocks in bird protection in Malta, is the excuse that birds are shot for stuffing, mounting and forming a collection. It is therefore a fairly recent decision by the Malta Ornithological Society not to make use of stuffed birds, not even for educational purposes, since the attitude of the unenlightened section of the public may interpret exhibited stuffed birds as an encouragement to kill more." Our exhibits also included models of Ghadira and Filfla, two important ornithological sites.

moreover, that less than 10% survive more than a month in captivity. Specially made traps which catch on both sides when a Robin attack the live decoy inside were on sale both in Malta and Gozo. The M.O.S. issued a press release to all the local papers condemning these acts and urging those responsible to see that such acts are stopped. Official letters were also sent to the departments concerned.

#### M.O.S. Young Members' Section

The Young Members' Section of the M.O.S. was started last year to cater for young members. The present young members' officer is B.K. German who is a dedicated and



A Robin in a cage. Though the Robin is protected, this is not an infrequent sight in Malta

(E. Caruana).

#### Acts that should make all Maltese faces blush.

Once again the influx of our winter resident, the Robin, in October was accompanied by a large number of people, young and old, roaming about in the country side, even in protected areas, trapping this protected species. It is estimated that not fewer than 20,000 robins are trapped in October and November. We are virtually certain,

been member of the Society. Outings and talks are held monthly, while leaflets with information and notes on our birds and the need to protect them are also issued exclusively to them. So far 6 leaflets have been published. The annual membership is 2s. 6d. and all youngsters under the age of 17 can join. Members of the M.O.S. and the public in general are asked to help in making youngsters

interested to join. The Young Members' Officer's address is 'Casa German', 126 Rudolph St., Sliema. **Bird-Watching introduced at the Lyceum in Gozo.**

Mr. P.P. Grech, B.A. (Hons.), M.A., Dip. Educ., Headmaster of the Lyceum, Secondary Technical School, Technical Institute and Gozo Industrial Training Centre,

in Gozo, has introduced bird-watching in his schools as one of the items of the extra-curriculum activities. He stopped the bird-stuffing club which was organised during last scholastic year and which was reported in the last issue of il-Merill. Mr. P.P. Grech should be congratulated for taking this action.

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## BIRD-WATCHING IN GOZO

J. SULTANA

The same general principles of bird watching mentioned in the article ~~Bird-Watching in Malta~~ by M. Beaman in il-Merill, Issue No. 2 should also be applied to Gozo. I would again stress the importance of wind direction. Gozo has several valleys running seaward. During unfavourable weather, migrants funnel through these valleys against the wind when coming to land, obviously seeking the best sheltered places.

Being smaller, Gozo's best sites are within easy reach. The plateau-surfaced hills, such as id Dabrani and Ta' Ghammar, provide excellent sites for good views of migrating flocks of Turtle Doves in spring, of Finches in autumn and of raptors (in fewer numbers) in both seasons.

The plains of Ta' Hamet and those round the village of San Lawrence attract the plovers, larks, pipits and wheatears, while the valleys, such as Marsalforn Valley, provide adequate habitat for arboreal birds. The rocky areas (e.g. Ta' Genc and il-Qortin ta' Marsalforn) also attract the larks, pipits and wheatears.

Gozo lacks adequate sites for waders, and though they can be frequently heard passing over, few can be watched. These alight on the several small dams (when rainwater is present) in various valleys, at the salt-pans at Xwieni and round the coast, preferring bays and inlets.

Night, Squacco, Grey and Purple Herons and Little Egrets can be seen singly or in flocks passing over, usually along the coast, where they frequently alight on rocks. Swifts and hirundines can be watched flying in every locality.

The small size of Gozo has another advantage for the bird-watcher. Species with different requirements of habitat can be noted in the same locality. Owing to the position of the Maltese Islands, one is never sure of what can turn up during migration and this makes bird-watching in Gozo, as in Malta, quite exciting. When quantity is lacking, quality is present.

~~All the above applies only for the migration seasons.~~ Otherwise, as in Malta, few species are present during the whole year. Following is a list of the breeding birds, which, except for the Short-toed Lark (a summer resident), can be seen all the year round, and where to watch for them.

~~Cory's Shearwater:~~ Along the southern cliffs. Can be heard only on moonless nights from March to September. During this time they can be seen offshore round the island, especially on windy days.